

Contagious by **theamiableanachronism**

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Pairings: Eleven/Jane H./Mike W.

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Summary: Eleven discovers that being sick is, actually, awful. Most of the time.

Contagious

El felt awful.

Joyce called it "a cold" but El thought it would make more sense to call it how it felt: "an Awful".

There were no nosebleeds but there were headaches and throat aches and chest aches, all brought on by horrible, wracking coughs that shook her whole body and made her sink further and further underneath the quilt on top of her twin bed.

To top it all off, she was confused and worried. All because half an hour ago, someone knocked on the door.

She'd tried to listen for who it was, but just as Joyce answered the door, she'd started coughing again, and when she recovered, the visitor was already inside and standing in her bedroom doorway, watching her with worried brown eyes.

"El?"

"Mike!"

Her heart leapt as his concerned expression quickly changed into a familiar smile that mirrored her own.

"Hey El! How, uh, how are you?"

She sat up, swallowed painfully, and shrugged.

He winced sympathetically. "Sorry."

"It's okay."

They smiled sadly at one another before El started coughing again.

"Hey," Mike said cheerfully, taking off his backpack and setting it on the foot of her bed. "I picked up some books for you at the library today." He unzipped the backpack and pulled out a stack of three books. El crawled forward and took them out of his hands, setting them in her lap as she settled back against the headboard. He ran excitedly to the side of the bed and sat down next to her, his legs dangling off the side.

"Look," he beamed, pointing to the first book, a thin yellow one with pyramids on the cover. "I found this one, all about the Egyptian gods; like we were talking about last week!"

El opened it to somewhere in the middle and a soft smile crossed her face.

"Cool," they murmured in unison, looking up from the pages and smiling at each other before Mike lifted up the next book, suddenly shy.

"Um, this one, well, I, uh, remember you saying you liked Anne of Green Gables and I guess it's a series! There are like, five other books, and this is the second one, and I saw it and thought of y-" He stopped and cleared his throat and picked up the third book, a green one labeled "Botany". "Uh, this one," he said, his voice a little louder and higher, his face a little pinker. "You and Will were talking about plants the other day so I thought maybe you might like this one." He said the last few words in a rush and turned his attention to his sneakers.

"Thank you, Mike," she said quietly, reverently flipping through "Anne of Avonlea". He looked back up and smiled shyly. "Sure."

For a few moments, the only sounds were the gentle rasping of turning pages as they silently read together and the gentle thumps of Mike's sneakers against the bedframe. El yawned and nearly leaned over to rest her head on Mike's shoulder but remembered guiltily that she was contagious and that they were sitting awfully close and more guiltily, how she didn't want to move away.

Thankfully, she didn't have to, because Mike suddenly jumped up and said, "Well, I better let you sleep. You're supposed to rest when you're sick. That's what my mom says anyways." He shrugged.

El nodded and Mike scooped up his backpack.

"Well...see you later, El."

"See you later." He waved and hesitantly left the room. She watched him go, hating that she was sick and that he was leaving. She felt better when he was there (this was true even when she wasn't sick). And there were the three books still sitting in her lap, reminding her of him, even though he'd only just left. She swallowed.

"Mike!"

He swung back into the doorway so quickly she wondered if he'd walked down the hallway at all.

"Yeah?"

"Um..." she swallowed again and opened her mouth. "I-"

Her eyes watered and she started coughing again, muffling it in her quilt. Between coughs, she managed to croak:

"ILOVEYOU."

She wouldn't have been surprised if he hadn't heard her at all, but when her coughing finally stopped, he was standing next to the bed, his mouth hanging slightly open. After what felt like forever, he blinked and opened his mouth to say something, but right at that moment, Joyce rushed into the room and Mike moved out of her way

so she could ask El questions like "Are you all right?" and "Do you need your medicine?" But when she'd answered them ("Yes" and "No") and Joyce had nodded and left, Mike was gone. El hadn't even seen him leave.

So here she was, looking back over the entire last half hour and wondering why he left without saying anything. She frowned and rolled over onto her side, facing the supercomm lying on her nightstand. All she'd done was tell him how she felt. Maybe he just hadn't heard her at all and was confused.

El sighed. That wasn't likely. So why-?

CLICK. There was a quick crackle of static followed by a muffled voice.

"El?"

El grabbed the supercomm.

"Mike?"

There was a long pause and then-

"I love you too. ... Over."

El smiled.